



الحركة العالمية للدفاع عن الأطفال / فرع فلسطين
Defence for Children International / Palestine Section



20

Twenty Years of Building a Palestinian Community

Fit for Children ● 1991 - 2011

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INTRODUCTION

by Rifat Kassis, General Director



This year, Defence for Children International-Palestine Section celebrates the 20th anniversary of its establishment in 1991. This celebration holds special meaning for the section's Board, General Assembly and staff, as it is the culmination of a journey that has seen us transform, through many endeavours and achievements, from modest beginnings into one of the most important Palestinian human rights organisations operating in the field of children's rights. DCI -Palestine Section operates from its main general administration offices in Ramallah, as well as from three other branches covering the north and south of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

DCI-Palestine Section began its operations in 1991 with only two people in a small office in Bethlehem, supported by a group of professional volunteers, all of whom worked tirelessly to put the organization on the map in Palestine. Those early efforts and dedication sowed the seeds of our present status: recognition of our work increased, as did the number of staff and volunteers, and today we are viewed as a pioneer of children's rights, garnering respect locally, regionally and internationally.

Dedicated to defending Palestinian children from Jenin in the North to Rafah in the far South, consecutive executive boards of DCI-Palestine

Section, along with their young members, were committed to the concerns of children, eager for success, and undaunted by the challenges. With these commitments, they were able to introduce radical changes within the organisation, to make the right decisions at the right time, and thus to lead the organisation from one success to another.

One of the most important such decisions was to extend our activities to encompass the entire country, including the Gaza Strip. DCI soon became a source of reliable information for local and international organisations on the subject of Palestinian children's rights. Another important decision was to diversify the organisation's programs in order to contribute to the development of a Palestinian society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights (including children's rights), while also exposing the Israeli occupation's policies and continuous violations of those rights and engaging in international advocacy and lobbying. The success of this strategy testified to the organisation's strength: none of it could have been accomplished without the cooperation and support of all of our staff and volunteers. A recent, ground-breaking strategic decision was to adopt the slogan "working with children" instead of working for them, a concept then transformed into reality with the establishment of the DCI Council of Children, whose representatives will

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become members of the section's board and general assembly and will participate in planning and delivering programs.

At the organisation's international level, the Palestine Section has made noteworthy progress via its effective participation in all of the programs run by the International Movement in Geneva. This involvement culminated in the election of our section's representative as President of the International Executive Board at the General Assembly meeting in Bethlehem in 2005. The Palestinian representative was elected unanimously by all Movement sections

Positive results have not been limited to our legal and administrative performance over the past twenty years: indeed, we have also taken an active role in working with other human rights groups to establish the Palestinian Council of Human Rights Organisations. This Council works together to improve the status of Palestinian human rights. DCI-Palestine Section is also involved in a number of other important civil society networks, in particular the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations

Network (PNGO), and the Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI) Defence Initiative on Occupied Palestine and Golan. Participation in these networks has

helped to strengthen the organisation's identity as a social institution active in the development of Palestinian society. Equally important is our role in supporting local community organisations, which we have been able to do by establishing the Palestinian Network for Children's Rights; this network has been instrumental in developing protection teams within a number of association members, increasing the protection of Palestinian children against all forms of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. .

DCI-Palestine Section has faced many difficulties, but with the support of its Board, Executive Administration, staff and members, as well as the support of the local community and other institutions, it has been able to overcome the challenges. Today, the organisation celebrates those for whom it was originally established, namely the children of Palestine.

A twenty-year history of excellence and achievements that has established DCI as a major and deeply rooted national organisation cannot be limited to simple statistics and events. Those responsible for the founding of the Palestine Section, those who have dedicated their time and effort to building its reputation as an organisation faithful to Palestine and its children, deserve our appreciation.



THE MOVEMENT: DCI-PALESTINE SECTION ESTABLISHMENT, MISSION, AND OBJECTIVES



Defence for Children International-Palestine Section was established in 1991. The Palestine Section is a member of Defence for Children International movement established in Geneva in 1979. This Movement enjoys advisory status at the UN Economic and Social Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, and the Council of Europe. It is also the coordinator of the Inter-agency Panel on Juvenile Justice (IPJJ) (formerly known as the Inter-Agency Coordination Panel on Juvenile Justice) was established by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1997/30 to act as a “coordination panel on technical advice and assistance in juvenile justice.” The work of the Panel is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, international standards and norms on juvenile justice and other relevant instruments.

Although it remains a member of a coalition within an international network, the Palestine Section is an independent, non-governmental organisation that develops its own programs and activities based on the needs and priorities of Palestinian children and society.

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Recalling the section’s inception in 1991, its founder, Rifat Kassis, says that at that time he was directing rehabilitation programs at the YMCA in the West Bank city of Beit Sahour. It was there that he met the director of the Defence for Children International-Israel Section; through him, Kassis learned about the Movement’s International Secretariat in Geneva. “Contacts

then started with the Secretariat to explore the necessary requirements for joining the Movement. The first step was to form a committee of ten, representing various sectors of society, and to apply to the International Movement, which would then consider the application at the first meeting of the International General Assembly,” says Kassis.

Kassis took the initiative to invite a group of professionals and individuals concerned about children’s rights to the first founding meeting at the YMCA in Beit Sahour, where they declared their willingness to form an organisation to care for children. The group included Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Jameel Jaraiseh, Androla Abu Aita, Selvana Jiaqaman, lawyer Liana Musa, and others. “ The then-Secretary General of the YMCA, the late Kameel Nasser, was sympathetic and allowed me to carry on with this role along with my work at the YMCA,” remembers Kassis.

Towards the end of 1991, the group submitted their application, which received tentative approval pending the meeting of the International General Assembly. The Assembly met in Granada in Spain in 1992, and Kassis was invited to attend from Palestine; there, he defended the importance of accepting Palestine at the International General Assembly. The discussion revolved around whether or not Palestine could be accepted as a full-fledged member since it was not yet recognised



as a state by international bodies. However, with the support of most sections, particularly those from the countries of the South, Palestine was accepted as an active member. Kassis recalls, "That was a very special moment in my life and in the history of the section, as I stood at the podium and received the Movement banner and the letter of acceptance as a full-fledged member of the International Movement."

For some time, Kassis remained Chairman of the Board as well as the director. The Section had neither employees nor any special offices. Kassis operated from his office at the YMCA. The first project implemented by the Section was the legal defence of Palestinian children arrested and held in Israeli jails. The project was carried out in partnership with the Israeli Section and the first lawyer worked on this project was Advocate Badera Khoury. "After that, we applied to a number of institutions requesting financial assistance, and the only positive reply we received was from the Dutch organisation- ICCO, who gave us support before we had obtained our official registration. This support enabled the Board to appoint some employees in mid-1993 and that was like a practical announcement of the section arrival as an organisational entity with programs," says Kassis.

Kassis remains especially grateful to ICCO as the first institution to support the Palestine



Section, noting that ICCO employees were also strong supporters of DCI, including Mr. Sjoerd van Schooneveld, Mr. Harry Derksen, and Ms. Mieke Zagt.

The first director of the Section was Ms. Maisa Hurani, who was succeeded by Ms. Nisreen Khalaf, then Mr. George Abu Al Zulof. The first office was just one room at the Paradise Hotel in Bethlehem. Eventually, an office was rented at the Nazzal Building before moving to the Rachel's Tomb area in Bethlehem on the main road between the city and Jerusalem. Later, the organisation moved to Dahiyat Al-Barid in the north of Jerusalem. Kassis says that the move to Jerusalem made it necessary to register there, which was done in the names of Mr. Sami Mushashaa' and Ms. Mira Riziq, both of whom played important roles from 1994 to 1996.

The Palestine Section was established as an independent Palestinian body, running one joint program with the Israeli Section. The project aimed to work specifically with Palestinian children in detention by representing them in Israeli military courts, monitoring their conditions, and visiting them in Israeli detention and interrogation centres



and prisons. This particular program came to an end in 1996 with Muhammad Abu Harthiyeh as its final manager.

Rifat Kassis served as the Chairman of the Board from 1991 to 1995, in addition to being the executive director during the first two years. He then left to work in Central Asia and was succeeded by Dr. Elias Rishmawi, followed by Mr. Nader Abu Amsha. Upon his return in 2001, Kassis became re-involved as a member before again becoming Chairman of the Board for another term. In 2005, he was elected as President of the International Movement at its International General Assembly meeting held in Bethlehem. He was re-elected for another term in 2008 at the international general assembly meeting in Belgium. His current term will end in November 2011 at the assembly meeting to be held in Uganda. In 2007, Ms. Randa Siniora was elected as Chair of the Board of the Palestine Section.

Kassis believes that DCI-Palestine Section was borne of a popular movement. In Palestine at the time of its establishment, the Intifada (uprising) was taking place, inspiring the formation of a number of popular structures; it also resulted in the idea of establishing an organisation to help children detained by the occupation forces. Kassis reinforces this fact with his own experience of detention at that time, when he was held in the same jail as many Palestinian children who were also detained by the occupation. That experience motivated him to establish a Palestine Section of DCI to care for children and their rights as a specific group. However, his initiative was also

part of a wider national and popular movement, and the Palestine Section has maintained a deep connection with the Palestinian people ever since.

MISSION

DCI-Palestine Section seeks to defend Palestinian children and protect their rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other tenets of international law; in accordance with these bodies, it develops various programs to provide legal support and advocacy for children. It also works to empower children and support their participation in Palestinian society in order to voice and represent their own issues and rights, and works with grassroots organisations to create an environment protective of children.

Using monitoring and documentation to highlight violations against children's rights in Palestine, DCI organises comprehensive awareness-raising and advocacy activities in cooperation with local and international organisations concerned with children's needs. Our aim is to deepen societal awareness and understanding of children's rights, as well as to promote collective responsibility in supporting and protecting those rights.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve the protective environment for children at the PA level.
- Improve the accountability of duty-bearers under both PA and Israeli jurisdictions.



Roles, Objective and Strategies : Several important questions were raised by the Board, administration, donor parties and some partners, as well as by the 2010 evaluation report on identity, roles and priorities. In order to more effectively focus our work, a clear definition of our roles, objectives and strategies has been identified.

ROLES

- Documentation: monitoring and documenting violations against children's rights.
- Defence: providing legal services to children and their families; implementing international defence and litigation programs in order to hold Israel accountable internationally.
- Empowerment: capacity-building of institutions working with children; developing children's capacities to participate in mechanisms; enhancing communication, networking, coordination and cooperation with others.
- The Section's objective for the coming years is to refocus its work, strengthening general organisation, improving transparency in our services, expanding only in responsible ways (and consolidating various activities).

Key Interests

Over time, DCI has accumulated experience in a range of fields. These include documentation, legal support, advocacy, campaigning, recruitment, working with children, providing psychological consultation, and working with other NGOs and CBOs

Our key areas of interest are:

Providing information and documentation related to abuses of children's rights, defending and protecting children. We are a pioneering Palestinian organisation dedicated to defending and protecting children; we are a legal organisation, not a service provider.

Working to unify human rights organisations in Palestine to effectively defend the rights of the Palestinian people. A network with a progressive voice can accelerate positive changes. Joint advocacy action with other like-minded groups is an important element in the strategy that should be developed. Communication with other social movements, such as the Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI) and the BDS campaign, will increase the number of supporters. The current mechanisms for cooperation among human rights institutions and civil society organisations and various ministries provide a good basis for developing this area of work. Progressive Israeli institutions who support the Palestinian demand for a homeland and recognise Palestinian national and political rights should also participate in this process.

Internationalising concern for Palestinian children: the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice has drawn the attention of networks all over the world, including the DCI International Secretariat based in Geneva. International solidarity campaigns are a key catalyst for change. We saw an example of the power of such campaigns in 2000, when the second Intifada broke out. At that time, the brutality exhibited by the Israeli led



to a wave of international protests, pressure and advocacy, as well as an increase in support for the victims of occupation. The focused campaign within the international community involved the DCI-IS, along with other NGOs, groups and networks working for peace in the Middle East. The Palestine Section provided the necessary information and tools to the international campaign, and coordinated relations with the centres of the DCI International Movement, including its primary headquarters in Geneva and its additional offices in New York and Brussels.

Building communications with countries and DCI sections in the South. DCI has built good working relations with several European organisations; more importantly, however, it is re-establishing communications and relations with organisations in the South, because sharing experiences and cooperation with those organisations -- especially those in countries experiencing conflict and war -- enriches the work of all parties and helps us to more fully implement our mission and vision. This also applies to participating in the World Social Forum and other international bodies, as they help to increase international cooperation and contribute to developing new strategies. DCI has much to offer to organisations operating in conflict areas, and must find the means to record and document its experiences and make them available in various languages.





THE GENERATION OF FOUNDERS AND PAST STAFF



Founders

Mr. Rifat Odeh Kassis, Dr. Elias Rashmawi, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Ms. Androal Abu Aita, Ms. Silvana Jiqaman, lawyer Eliana Musa, and Mr. Jameel Jaraiseh. The organisation was registered in Jerusalem under the names of Mr. Sami Mushashaa' and Ms. Mira Riziq.

Consecutive Chairpersons of the Board

Mr. Rifat Kassis, Dr. Elias Rishmawi, Mr. Nader Abu Amsha, Ms. Randa Siniora.

Consecutive members of the Board

Dr. Majed Nassar, Mr. Mahmoud Jaddeh, Mr. Ibrahim Al-Masri, Ms. Suad Abu Dayyeh, Mr. Shawan Jabareen, Mr. Nassar Ibrahim, Mr. Nidal Abul Zuluf, lawyer Mary Rock, Ms. Sulaima Al Haj, Mr. Shadi Jaber, Ms. Mai Mera'i Mr. Fayez Fasfoos, Mr. Khalid Farraj, Mr. Husam Sababa, Mr. Imad Misbah, lawyer Sahar Francis, Ms. Iman Hamouri, Mr. Zacharia Odeh, Mr. Musa Rabadi, Dr. Naiem Abu Tair, Dr. Jacqleen Sfair, Ms. Mai Duwani, Ms. Muna Zaghroot, Ms. Mirvat Rishmawi.

General Directors (according to seniority)

Mr. Rifat Kassis, Ms. Maisa Hurani, Ms. Nisreen Khalaf, Mr. George Abul Zuluf.

Past and early Employees

Mr. Muhammad Abu Harthiyeh, lawyer Khalid Quzmar, Mr. Riad Arar, Mr. Nasser Atallah, Mr. Iyad Warasneh, Ms. Musaiika Obaid, Ms. Rola Al-Husaini, Ms. Jamileh Shanan, Mr. Subhi Al-Jabari, the late Yunan Semreen, Ms. Hidaya Ameen, Mr. Ayed Abu Qtaish.







DCI-Palestine Section consists of the General Assembly, Board of Directors, the Director General, and two programs: the accountability and legal work program, protection and community mobilisation program in addition to the administrative and legal affairs department. Each program and department has sub-units.

Administrative and Legal Affairs department

This department consists of four units:

A. The Financial Unit:

This unit is in charge of financial planning and analysis and overseeing various detailed financial transactions. It is also responsible for preparing the general budget and specific project budgets. It prepares a range of financial reports, including those for the organisation's funding parties, as well as monthly, bi-annual and annual reports.

The Financial Unit's performance is professional and transparent and it has a specialised professional team applying strict accountancy principles. Work division is applied in order to guarantee sound internal audits. It has developed a financial manual to complement the internal administrative development of the organisation, and this was also accompanied by the development of an e-financial program.

This unit is also busy developing its internal administrative procedures and relations with other units and programs to guarantee an accurate and professional flow of work.

B. Program Development Unit:

This unit is responsible for relationships with the funding parties. It seeks to develop funding relations into true partnerships rather than simply interactions between "donor" and "recipient." The Program Development Unit is also developing correspondence and reporting mechanisms with our funding partners; likewise, it continuously seeks to establish relations with new donors who share the organisation's vision by maintaining a permanently updated list of such funding bodies. This is essential in guaranteeing the financial stability of the organisation.

C. Administrative and Human Resource Unit:

The work of this unit is twofold. First, administration, which includes supervising all administrative affairs at the main headquarters and branch centres; supervising organisational properties; facilitating work at offices; procurements, supplies and programs' administrative needs. This unit is also responsible for personnel affairs, including following up on attendance, salaries, and employee and volunteer contracts, as well as their job descriptions, leave, and staff development needs.



D. Information Technology Unit:

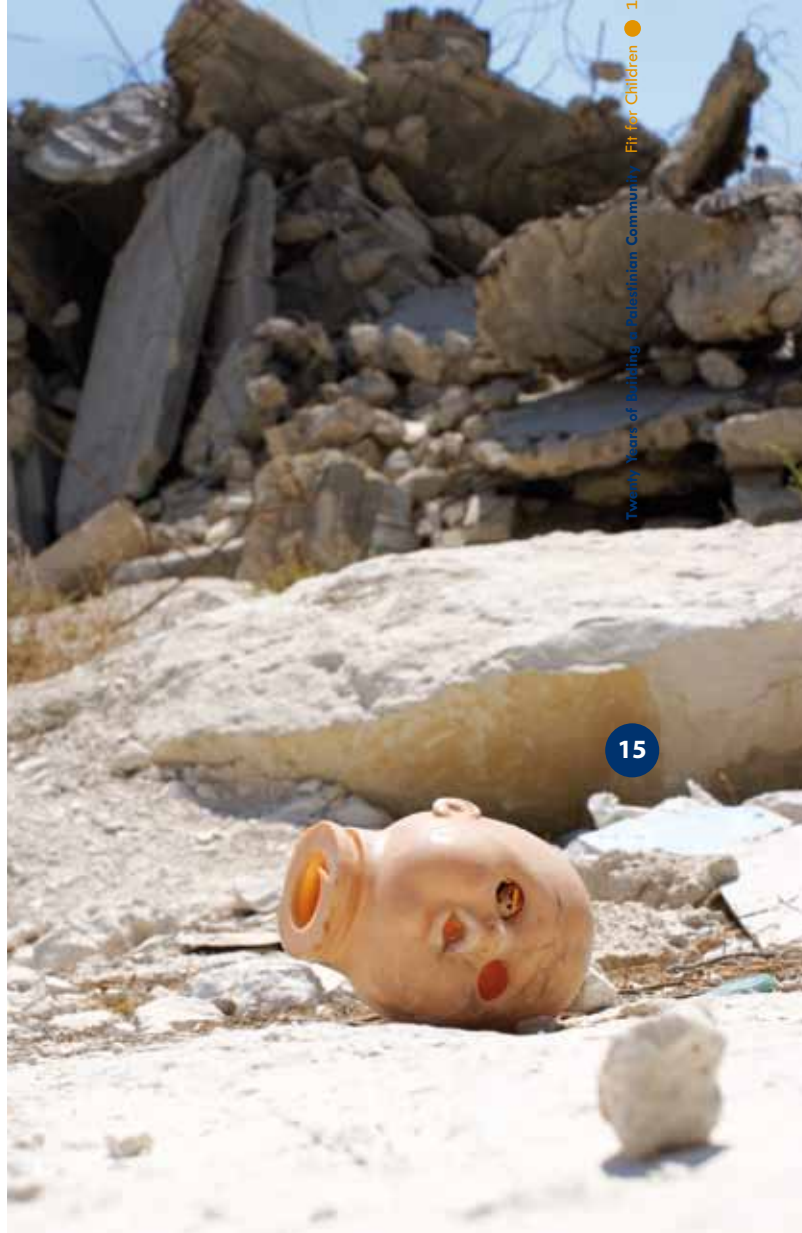
This unit is in charge of everything related to technology within the organization. It is responsible for maintaining equipment and IT programs, designing the web page, maintaining the network and its technical supervision, developing mechanisms of internal communication among the staff, and updating electronic systems to guarantee security of information, in addition to the administrative affairs of the Unit itself and providing technical electronic support for staff.

Accountability and Legal Work Program

This program consists of three units:

A. Monitoring and Documentation Unit:

This unit is responsible for monitoring and documenting violations of children's rights. In the beginning, it documented Israeli violations; later it began to document Palestinian abuses against children as well. The unit focuses on abuse of the right to life, including deaths and injuries of children and the use of children as human shields. It also documents Israeli settler violence against children; violations against the right to freedom, which includes torture and harassment of children; and abuses of other rights, such as the right to housing and education (which includes attacks on schools). DCI is regarded as the only Palestinian non-governmental organisation specialised in documenting violations against Palestinian



children's rights, working with a team of field workers distributed throughout the West Bank regions, including Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. The Documentation Unit Database is considered to be the primary source of accurate, documented information on this subject used not only by DCI but local and international institutions.

B. The Legal Unit:

This unit provides legal support and defence to Palestinian children in the Israeli courts. It also monitors the conditions in which detained Palestinian children are held, making regular visits to Israeli detention and interrogation centres and collecting data and depositions on their detention, including any interrogation techniques, torture and harassment to which they are subjected. The Legal Unit also files complaints to the relevant Israeli parties on behalf of detained children. This unit provides legal advice to detained children and their families, and the unit's lawyer also monitors military court procedures and their compatibility with international standards of justice. Field visits for foreign lawyers and activists to military courts are also organised so that firsthand information on Israeli violations against the rights of Palestinian detained children can be provided.

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C. Advocacy Unit:

The Advocacy Unit primarily seeks to highlight abuses against Palestinian children and to have offenders brought to justice or made accountable. To do so, this unit submits reports to various UN agencies, such as those monitoring the implementation of conventions like the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Anti-Torture Committee and the UN Human Rights Committee.

Reports are also submitted to the UN Special Rapporteurs, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Special Rapporteur on Torture. Reports and interventions are also submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in cooperation with various UN bodies and delegations.

The Advocacy Unit also uses the media to expose Israel's violations of children's rights, and communicates with human rights organisations and international workers' unions. It regularly publishes research studies, reports, booklets and press releases on the state of Palestinian children's rights in order to raise awareness within local and international communities on Israeli abuses of the rights of the child. In September 2001, DCI launched an international campaign entitled Immediate Release, calling for the release of detained Palestinian children. The campaign received the support of a vast number of activists and organisations both at local and international levels.

Protection and Community Mobilisation program

This program consists of two units:

A. Child Justice Unit:

This unit seeks to protect the rights of children who are victims of violence and neglect in society, as well as to protect children who come into conflict with the law under the Palestinian National Authority. The Child Justice Unit also works on developing a fair judicial system for children in accordance with international standards of





juvenile justice. To do so, this unit monitors and documents violations against children; it also provides legal representation for the children and legal counselling to children and their families, as well as to childhood protection networks (such as the Palestinian Network for Children's Rights) and to various institutions active in the field of child protection. The Child Justice Unit also monitors the status of child victims of violence, providing protection in conjunction with partner institutions.

By participating in legal committees dealing with legislation such as the Juvenile Draft Law, in addition to proposing amendments on the Child Law, this unit plays an active role in developing Palestinian legislation and policies for child protection in various ministries and institutions that operate in this field.

B. Community Mobilisation Unit:

The strategy of this unit is based on the coordination and exchange of experiences among grassroots organisations, communities within Palestinian society, and groups involved in childhood protection and development. This unit established a Palestinian network for children's rights in 2005 and is working hard to strengthen its sustainability, development and empowerment as the principal front in the defence of the Palestinian children's rights. The Community Mobilisation Unit focuses on two specific rights: the right to participation and the right to protection. In order to

guarantee children's participation, this unit has been empowering Palestinian children to take part in planning and evaluating annual events like Palestinian Children's Day, Prisoner's Day, and other events, in addition to actively attending such events. It is also working on establishing "DCI Junior," which will provide them with more opportunities to participate and express their views, as well as to have an impact on programs and activities targeting children. This will also help to maintain the network's achievements in the areas of participation and protection.

This unit aims to raise Palestinian children's awareness about their rights, develop their life skills, and encourage their effective participation in society. These programs and activities include expanding the project entitled "The Palestinian Girl" as well as "Palestine: The Future," which aims to encourage Palestinian children to think of the role they want to have in the future of the Palestinian state. Both projects also include training on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child-to-child methodology, and awareness-raising workshops on human rights. The Community Mobilisation Unit also carries out awareness-raising campaigns and training courses in local communities, in order to deepen their understanding of children's rights and to strengthen their collective responsibility in the promotion and protection of children's rights. In pursuit of this awareness-raising goal, the unit produces many different materials including posters, folders and stickers.









FUTURE ASPIRATIONS AND APPROACHES

Throughout its twenty years of activity, DCI-Palestine Section has proved to be a formidable organisation and an effective advocate for the rights of Palestinian children in the struggle against the Israeli occupation and in the Palestinian National Authority Territories. The Section opted to focus on the “most needy” children and those who “suffer most,” a position that has garnered appreciation and trust for the organisation from all levels of Palestinian society. This has been largely achieved through the commitment and dedication of our volunteers and employees.





NEW REALITY IN PALESTINE

The first Intifada (uprising) occurred in 1987 and lasted until 1991, but its effects remain visible through today. It was during this period that DCI began its activity in Palestine. Similar conditions following the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000 propelled the Section to develop a new vision and approaches, including new concepts within our programs and changes in internal organisation, plans and policies, as well as improving staff capacity. All this was necessary in order to face the new challenges facing our work. Today, more than a decade after the second Intifada, human rights have deteriorated on all levels, the peace process is more paralysed than ever before, and the international financial crisis continues. In the face of such obstacles, DCI must develop a new vision once again.

In addition to the obvious challenges, there are several other elements, both positive and negative, which have influenced the landscape since DCI was established. The most extensive of these have been the creation of the Palestinian National Authority and the need to focus on establishing its institutions and ministries; the split between Gaza and the West Bank; and the total segregation of Jerusalem. Other changes include the international economic and financial crisis which began in September 2008, with grave consequences for the funding of NGOs, including DCI; the expansion and strengthening of European integration and its impact on advocacy and litigation; and the development of the international solidarity movement, including the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions



(BDS) campaign against Israel, among others. Paradoxically, however, local distrust of NGOs is increasing across both public and government sectors.

The issue of distrust is a particular kind of challenge facing successful NGOs. It has a negative impact on public support and protection that NGOs should enjoy when threatened, and also affects funding, putting their very existence at risk. Internationally, too, funding for NGOs is decreasing, and expectations for the future are bleak. While the international financial crisis is certainly a cause of diminishing funding, there are also more complicated reasons at play in the case of Palestine. Since the launch of the “War on Terror,” DCI-Palestine Section has experienced restrictions on its work; our appeals to concerned international parties have been taken lightly, while there have also been ludicrous attempts to link our work to “terrorism.” Exerting pressure on one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has meant that donor parties have become less interested in funding NGOs and more engaged in funding institutions (governmental or otherwise) with certain political agendas. In addition, working for human rights within the existing political atmosphere is met with automatic rejection from the Israeli government, which regards such activity as undermining Israel’s legitimacy. Israel, supported by Zionist lobbies, is targeting many Palestinian and even Israeli human rights NGOs with the aim of putting them on a blacklist and eroding their credibility.

The credibility of our organisation and its experience in various fields is beyond doubt. It is obvious that the programs implemented by DCI

benefit large numbers of children and the civil society organisations that receive our services.

However, it is also clear that Palestine is experiencing a period of political and economic transformation, requiring the Palestine Section to continue analysing its strategic options; recognise its current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and assert the links between our work and the reality on the ground. The Section must continue to work to preserve human dignity; to achieve a just peace; to protect human rights in general and children’s rights in particular; and, at the same time, to continue its tradition of respect for and cooperation with other institutions.

We have recently taken preparatory steps to face the changes mentioned above, including:

- Regular reviews of work, involving the Board, staff, children and other partners in analysing and planning processes, in order to prepare for social, economic and political changes that affect the daily life of children as well as the long term needs of the Palestinian society. This will allow us to evaluate when and how the organisation should intervene and what the nature of our intervention should be.
- Developing the organisational structure to equip the Section to respond effectively and vitally in facing the international crisis and other challenges that affect the Palestinian situation. We have thus designed a cohesive vision and mission statement, as well as clear values and organisational practices compatible with the rich history of DCI in society.



Present and Future: General Objectives

While it is important to remember our history as an organisation and look to the future with this history in mind, it is even more vital that we renew our vision and mission and implement them through continuous dialogue and consultation. DCI believes in a leadership approach that works in an open, empowering, and reciprocal fashion.

DCI-Palestine Section seeks to be:

1. Less centralised, while maintaining strategic approaches, unified policies and representation, both internationally and locally.
2. A civil society organisation committed to mobilising and empowering, not controlling, local organisations. This form of guidance encourages social initiatives to become new civil society organisations that will be more independent and less reliant on DCI. It is important that we remain a dynamic organisation, working from “a bottom up” approach with content and direction determined at the grassroots level.
3. A movement of volunteers, rather than one dependent on employees, by changing the voluntary work concept and involving the largest possible number of people, institutions and children in our decision-making mechanisms.
4. A transparent, responsible and credible movement, developing internal accountability and promoting the concept of “mutual accountability” among employees, targeted

groups and various bodies with whom we work, with the aim of improving mechanisms of mutual accountability. We have already improved the quality of our reports and distribution processes and have implemented some “bureaucratic” mechanisms to raise the level of communication with targeted groups.

5. A movement of children for the sake of children. Continuous self-appraisal changed the original approach (as characterises most DCI sections), by which DCI aimed primarily to defend children. Over time, the section became a childcare agency providing services to children. The flaw in this approach is that it rarely allows children themselves to employ their capacity to determine policies or have an impact on existing policies. However, DCI-Palestine is known as an organisation that works for children’s rights. We have developed this reputation by involving children directly in designing and implementing policies, as well as by forming the Council for Children, where elected child representatives enjoy observer status at the Board of Administration and the General Assembly; this, too, has impacted on our policies and strategies. Thus, we also aim to be:
 - An organisation that remains open to children and a source of encouragement and inspiration for them.
 - A place where children can gather and express their concerns and have an impact on lobbying and litigation issues.



An organisation committed to the capacity-building of its staff. A program has been introduced to develop staff capacities through a series of workshops and training courses. Improving information and communication are some of the main issues given attention in the program. Alliances have also been built with human rights organisations, social movements, civil society organisations, and other networks who share our ideas, especially with those who defend children's rights.

7. The Section seeks to achieve sustainability without sacrificing our vision and mission or losing our independence. To this end, we try to raise local funds by developing the work of the capacity-building unit and expanding capacity-building activities locally and internationally, as this helps to guarantee some additional funding. We also have a campaign entitled "1000 supporters" which aims to involve the local community in funding the organisation.



Working Towards the Creation of a Sustainable Identity

DCI has re-structured and re-focused its work, laying out plans to achieve long term institutional and financial sustainability. A leading body was created with clear administrative responsibilities and powers, and with an enhanced level of transparency and democracy in decision-making and implementation.

It is our belief that organisational structure should be compatible with the organisation's content and programs. Therefore, restructuring programs does not simply mean rearranging current projects and activities; rather, it requires a serious response based on our principles and identity as an organisation. The restructuring process is normally accompanied by questions such as: Why does DCI implement certain projects or activities? Is that the best approach? Is a particular project sufficiently strategic? How does DCI implement the project/activity and involve its other partners? Are we in a better position to take the initiative in a given situation, or should others take the lead? How can we promote our impact in the short, medium and long term? What is the best administrative and financial structure to support our projects?

It has proved necessary to involve our staff in these re-evaluation and re-structuring processes, particularly as the workload is enormous and salaries are very modest. The full participation of the staff as a team and as individuals is of paramount importance. Since January 2009, salaries have been reviewed and improved, and a comprehensive program to develop our human resources has begun.

In addition, the organisation has developed its relationships with some donors and ended relationships with others because of differences in objectives and vision, and we have negotiated with several others to change their project funding into core funding.

While there is well-recognised continuous participation by DCI in several fields of work



and mutual relations with networks, it is still necessary to prioritise our own roles and responsibilities. We need to define the best locations for our work, the experience we can provide to other civil society institutions, and the experiences from which we can learn how to work together.

DCI-Palestine Section's General Director, Rifat Kassis, says that we have to think of ourselves as a network and to work to promote DCI as such. "For those of us who are involved in similar fields and in other active parties, we have to share our experience in documentation and fieldwork and to do more in compiling our statistical and social researches. We can also combine efforts in litigation and advocacy. Our success in focusing on ways through which we and our local partners can plan and implement projects together can, at the same time, help alleviate our professional and financial burdens and can make our projects more cohesive, effective and cooperative. Building such trust will take time but it augurs well for the future," says Kassis.

Kassis believes there are other tangible ways to reduce costs and expenses by re-evaluating, with our local partners, how to improve cooperation. Consolidating and rationalising the staff payroll at human rights organisations, starting from directors down, would enhance transparency and reduce accusations of high salaries and special privileges often levelled at NGOs.

Kassis also suggests that we can diversify our income sources. We could, for instance, charge some fees for the services we provide, sell printed materials, and begin targeting possible donors with social agendas in the private sector. Shifting our focus to these approaches, and reducing our reliance on donor organisations who already suffers financial cuts due to the international crisis, will make our fundraising strategy more creative. As Kassis clarifies, "The aim is not to relinquish our traditional funding sources, but to avoid a situation whereby we become dependent on one source."





QUALITATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS AND LANDMARKS

DCI has continued to play a leading role locally in supporting and protecting Palestinian children. We were the first Palestinian NGO dedicated to improving the quality of children's lives through programs focusing on their rights. In doing so, we have realised a number of important achievements over the last two decades:

The first qualitative leap, according to lawyer Khalid Quzmar who has been with DCI since 1996, occurred that same year: "Two decisions were taken at a Board meeting at the time, the first was to end the partnership with the Israel Section in providing legal support for detained children, and to continue the project alone," says Quzmar.

He also adds that the decision, although a strategic one, was not easy, since funding was conditional on maintaining the partnership, and some donor organisations withdrew their finances as a result of the decision. The second decision was to expand the work of the Palestine Section by providing psycho-social support and counselling to children liberated from Israeli jails, and to begin an awareness-raising campaign throughout Palestinian society on

children's rights -- by targeting the children themselves or those working with children, such as teachers and social workers. Consequently, the Section raised its profile at both Palestinian and international levels.

The second leap forward, according to Quzmar, was the relocation to Ramallah. There, DCI began to work on building the capacities of those working with children, as well as providing training on children's rights to teachers, probation officers, the Palestinian police, and other law enforcement bodies. Quzmar notes that the Section raised its profile by working with other human rights institutions to formulate Palestinian legislation compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. DCI played a major role in developing the drafting of the Palestinian Child Law in 2004.

Crises Intervention Project: With the beginning of the second Intifada and the accompanying escalation in Israeli violations of children's rights -- together with Israeli incursions into Palestinian towns and targeted killings of Palestinians, destruction of properties, and arrests -- DCI realised the need to work with child victims of Israeli abuses, and thus expanded its psycho-social counselling program to include all of the Palestinian territories. Nine work groups were formed, each consisting of 25-30 volunteers in the psycho-social field. The following activities were carried out:

Social activities: The Section organised a group of workshops and activities for children in the governorates of Hebron, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqyilia, Tulkarem and the Gaza Strip. The objective of these workshops was to address



feelings of anxiety, tension and fear among children, and to give them an opportunity to express the pressure they felt as a result of the daily attacks by occupation forces. These activities were organized in cooperation and coordination with various local organisations and included drawing, story-reading, recreational games, balloon-making, psycho-social counselling, music, singing and drama.

Lectures: Lectures were provided to parents and teachers on helping children to cope with the prevailing circumstances, as well as on how to recognise and deal with psychological and emotional distress in children.

TV programs: DCI also organised a number of TV programs in cooperation with Palestine TV and some other local TV stations in the various governorates. These programs were aimed at raising public awareness on how to deal with children who developed psychological problems resulting from the prevailing conditions. A group of specialists and experts were hosted on the programs to elaborate on children's problems and to provide advice to families.

4. Other Developments

The publication of annual reports detailing the most flagrant violations perpetrated by the occupation against children. The reports mainly included the numbers of martyrs, injured and detained, and the Section began to keep official figures in this regard.

In 2004 new relations were established with partners, and a Section branch was opened in Bethlehem. The centre provides "training for trainers" on the rights of the child "from one child to another," and provides services to children.

On October 23, 2008 a Section branch was opened in Nablus to serve the northern area of the West Bank. This centre runs various programs, sometimes in partnership with official, local and international organisations and institutions, including various ministries, the police and the judiciary -- as well as with the YMCA and OXFAM-Italy, which is supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The establishment of the Palestinian Network for Children's Rights is a major landmark for the DCI Movement in general and DCI-Palestine Section in particular. The Network comprises 65 grassroots organisations in various regions and from across the Palestinian spectrum. Via the Network, child-focused events are celebrated such as Palestinian Children's Day on April 5, International Children's Day on June 1, and Palestinian Prisoner's Day on April 17. National campaigns in support of the rights of children are also organised under various headings.

National Childhood protection networks: DCI worked to establish the first network for the protection of childhood in Bethlehem. The network includes NGOs operating in the field of children's rights; relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour; the police; the public prosecution; the judiciary; and sometimes local municipalities. It was later agreed upon with the Ministry of Social Affairs to run and expand networks across all of the Palestinian governorates.



5. DCI's Role in the Goldstone Report

Among DCI-Palestine Section's most important achievements in the realm of international advocacy was our role in the Goldstone Report. According to Ayed Abu Qtaish, Manager of the Accountability Program, DCI presented three papers to the investigation committee, one of which was on the use of children as human shields, an act that is regarded as a war crime. During its land operations, the Israeli army used at least six children as human shields.

The second paper was on children killed or injured in Israeli attacks against schools or nearby targets. At least 28 children were killed in two UNRWA schools and one government school, used as shelters for civilians and their children during Israeli raids. Seven other schools were totally destroyed and 168 schools were partially destroyed. These assaults are regarded as a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The third paper was entitled "Arrests of Children in the West Bank Increased During the Attack on Gaza." The data DCI provided formed the principal material used in the Goldstone Report in relation to violations of children's rights. Along with other organisations and institutions, DCI exerted pressure for the report to be adopted by the Human Rights Council, and referred it to other international bodies in order to press for perpetrators to be brought to account for grave violations of civilians' rights.

6. Role of the Palestinian Section in the International Movement

The first international participation of the Palestine Section was in Spain in 1992, where it was officially recognised as a section.

The Section was absent at the Senegal meeting in 1995, but attended all the following meetings, including Geneva, Switzerland in 1999, Argentina in 2002, Bethlehem, Palestine in 2005, and Belgium in 2008.

The Section's international role became more prominent at the Geneva meeting. At that time, work at the International Executive Office and the General Secretariat in Geneva was facing difficulties; Rifat Kassis, along with the directors of the Senegal, Holland and Australia sections, was selected to run the General Secretariat and the DCI office in Geneva. This situation continued until the Argentina meeting in 2002, when a new International Council and Secretary General were elected and a new team to run the Movement and its office in Geneva was appointed. The Palestinian Section became more visible at this stage within the International Movement and began to be regarded as an important section within the Movement generally.

At the International General Assembly meeting in Bethlehem in 2005, which reunified the Movement, Rifat Kassis was unanimously elected as the DCI International Chairman, making him the first DCI International Chairman to enjoy the full support of all DCI sections.



The presence of Rifat Kassis in Geneva allowed DCI Palestine to take up a greater role in strengthening and consolidating its international activity and to become an active presence in international circles and at the UN agencies.

In 2008, the International General Assembly held its meeting in Belgium.

7. DCI Activities in Jerusalem

Activity in Jerusalem has developed through the “Kanaan Project” by providing legal and civil society support. This project focused on partnership and complementation with a number of NGOs to support the steadfastness of Palestinians in the

city, and to enable them to withstand the daily challenges of the occupation. Its key activities focused on supporting civil society organisations to defend the civilian, political and social rights of Palestinians in Jerusalem. “The role of the section is based on supporting and protecting children and their rights in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law. DCI developed various programs focusing on legal support for children,” says Mr. Hani Jaber, Coordinator of the Kanaan Project. He also notes that although the project ran from 2008 to 2011, it faced many obstacles that prevented its full implementation, including the difficult work environment in the city and continuous Israeli harassment of the project.





During the course of the project, DCI worked with groups of children to empower and involve them in issues related to their rights. It also monitored and documented violations of children's rights, and organised advocacy activities in cooperation with local organisations and agencies there, with the aim of deepening awareness of Israeli violations of Palestinian children's rights in Jerusalem.

Working conditions in occupied Jerusalem are complicated, harsh and risky. There are continuous daily confrontations with the occupation, which seeks to restrict all activity within the framework of racist Israeli law. The occupation has tightened its grip on Palestinian civil society organisations in the city, prohibiting those that own halls from engaging in any activities, meetings, conferences or workshops that the occupation regime considers to be political. It was due to this kind of harassment that DCI was forced to move its

conference "Childhood in Jerusalem" from Jerusalem to Ramallah.

Jaber notes that Jerusalem has not been a priority on the agendas of Palestinian Authority institutions, which has reduced the possibilities for providing direct support to Palestinians in the city. Civil society organisations in Jerusalem have diverse priorities and so cannot fulfil all existing needs; while some organisations under-perform, others have meagre resources and others have not employed their resources effectively.

For Jaber, the Kanaan Project was a qualitative addition to existing efforts in Jerusalem. The project prepared several reports on the needs and priorities of civil society and grassroots organisations. DCI worked with ten grassroots groups, mainly clubs whose activities usually rely on volunteers, including Um Tuba, Sur Baher, Jabal Al-Mukaber, Silwan and Al-Bara'ah Society, Al-Saraya Society, Nidal Center, Shu'aa Society, and the Old City Youth Society. These groups did not previously have any programs for action with children. Jaber reports that there were some difficulties in working with these groups; nevertheless, DCI went a long way in collaborating with them on programs related to children and their rights, as well as in raising awareness through education, which is a major role of the project and facilitates its success.

In terms of legal activities, DCI-Palestine Section followed up on the cases of detained children in Sheikh Jarrah, Ras Al-Amood and Silwan, in addition to providing legal support at children's trials and documenting continuous violations of



children's rights in Jerusalem, such as the right to education and health and attacks by settlers.

The Section has also implemented "training for trainers" programs, targeting 30 people from ten grassroots organisations, in order to provide training for group work with children. Jaber stresses that there have been many benefits and practical results from this training, recalling that each graduate of the training courses had to form a group of children and work with them. The groups of children created their own initiatives related to the rights of the child on issues of education, health, the apartheid wall, and annexation and expansion. These initiatives were presented at the Jerusalem Child Conference.

Important international and national conferences

Since 2003, DCI-Palestine Section has organized eight important national conferences, with the third and eighth conferences having an international dimension. Children's participation in these conferences proves that they can play a real and effective role in building a civil society that transforms rights into practice and legislation, and in building a world worthy of its children.

- The most recent conference for Palestinian children was held on November 10, 2010, and was the second such international conference in Palestine. Entitled "Protective Environment, Active Participation: Together We Build and Change," this conference was held in Bethlehem.
- The seventh national conference for Palestinian children was held in Ramallah on November 11, 2009, with the title "Twenty Years After the International Convention on the Rights of the Child."



- The sixth national conference was held on November 19, 2008, entitled “Children’s Initiatives -Community Initiatives.”
- The fifth national conference, “Children’s Rights and the Media,” took place on August 26, 2007. This conference was held in honour of the late human rights activist, Renzo Mafi from ARCI International, a friend and supporter of Palestinian rights.
- The fourth national conference was held in Bethlehem on August 22, 2006, entitled “Protection from child Abuse Neglect and Exploitation .”
- The third conference, also an international conference, was held in Bethlehem in 2005, entitled “No Klds Behind Bars.”
- The second national conference for Palestinian children was held in Hebron in 2004 on “Developing and Promoting Child Girl’s Rights.”
- The first national conference for Palestine children was held in Ramallah in 2003, entitled “Palestine: The Future.”

International Participation

Mr. Rifat Kassis, President of Defence for Children International, founder of Palestine Section, a Board member of the same, was invited to become a member of the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council f on t Children,” The Council convened for a year to monitor international challenges facing children and to propose possible solutions.

The World Economic Forum hosted the meeting of the Council in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Each of the International Agenda Councils included 15 to 30 international experts. Kassis’ membership in the Council constituted a significant opportunity to raise the issues of Palestinian children, especially those related to Israeli violations of their rights.

DCI presents a report to the UN Rights of the Child Committee on the recruitment of children for military activities

The Israeli and Palestinian sections of DCI issued a joint report on August 15, 2009 on the use of Palestinian children in military activities by the Israeli authorities. The report was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child at its meeting on January 2010 to discuss the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child involving children in armed conflicts.

The report focused on the repeated use of Palestinian children as human shields by Israeli soldiers, as well as on their recruitment as informers by Israeli intelligence, in violation of Article 2 of the Optional Protocol (which Israel ratified in 2005).

The report covers the period between January 2005 and June 2009, during which up to 11 Palestinian children were used as human shields, or forced to help Israeli soldiers in military operations in six incidents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and during the “Cast Lead” operation waged against the Gaza Strip. It should be noted that most of these children were subjected to maltreatment during the incidents, that their lives were put at risk, and that they were subjected to terror and psychological harm.





LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

- ARCS Infanzia (ARCI) - Italy.
 - Australian . people for health, education and development abroad
 - Bread for the World
 - British Council
 - Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
 - Children at Risk- Netherlands
 - Christian aid
 - Enfants du monde droits de l'homme
 - Global Ministries.
 - Muntada Bait Al maqdes
 - Norwegian Peoples Aid
 - Quaker Service - American Friends Service Committee
 - Radda Barnen- Sweden
 - save the children - us/uk/Sweden
 - Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) - The Netherlands
 - TIPH
- UNICEF
 - KerkinActie - Netherlands
 - Mundubat - Spain
 - Palestinain prime minister
 - European Commission
 - Swedish Consulate
 - SIDA
 - UNICEF
 - Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederlands (SKN)
 - Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED) - Germany
 - OXFAM - Italy
 - NGO Development Center - NDC
 - Danish Representative Office
 - Dutch Representative Office
 - Palestinian Prisoners Club
 - Palestinian Ministry of Education
 - Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs
 - Palestinian Ministry of Prisoners and Ex-Detainees





Mr. Nasser Mutair

Ms. Rose Marie Acha

Mr. Wabser Moharak

Mr. Riccardo Sennese

International Children's Conference 2010
"Partnership - Action Participation"
Together We Build and Change
10 - 12 October 2010
المؤتمر الدولي للأطفال

VIEWS OF DCI

Mr. George Abul Zolof,

Former General Director of DCI-Palestine Section

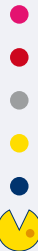
“I was so attached to this organisation. I loved working in it...I grew up and learned in it...I lived and experienced my aspirations and dreams through it...I gave it all I could and it rewarded me with more ... by being part of its issues and concerns which were all the time the issues and concerns of the Palestinian child.

“I had the privilege of being in at the start of the organisation and to see it grow, have a clear vision and a humanitarian mission.... become a united and cohesive family...proceeding confidently in bringing its mission into the light...I have seen the joy and smiles on the faces of our children...their hope and determination for a better future.

“All this only enhanced my own love for the organisation, strengthening my will and determination to give more so that we could protect this growing hope...

“We have passed through many major challenges, some of which were difficult turning points, but determination and faith in our mission provided the compass that empowered those faithful, first generation founders to overcome all obstacles.

“As [DCI-Palestine Section] celebrates its 20th anniversary, I congratulate the children of Palestine first of all, those for whom the Movement of DCI was created and for whom it will continue to exist. I congratulate the Movement family, all the staff and all those who have worked with it in the past. I appreciate their great efforts in maintaining and guaranteeing its progress, as without you this lovely flower would not have grown and spread its scent throughout Palestine and the world. Thanks and appreciation to the founding team, especially my friend, Rifat Kassis who was always the ideal and caring father of this organisation -- to all of you I bow my head in respect and shake your hands.”



**Mr. Muhammad Abu
Harthiyeh,
Former employee**

“DCI’s establishment was a response to the violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian children, particularly detained children tried in the Israeli military courts. The joint project of the Israeli and Palestinian Sections was a response to juvenile justice at a time when the rights of the child were marginalised and not considered a priority. All Palestinians were subjected to grave abuses of their rights, while struggling to establish their own state and declaring their commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“The DCI Movement has developed into a lead organisation on the rights of the child in Palestine. The Movement contributed to raising public awareness, understanding and respect for those rights at home, school and the society in general. I had the honour of working for this organisation and feel proud of its achievements over the past twenty years.”

**Husam Bali,
Chairman of the board of “DCI Junior”**

The DCI Movement through children’s eyes:

“DCI Junior” was affiliated with DCI and was established at the Children’s General Assembly meeting held in Ramallah in February 2011. Nine children were elected from various governorates to the Council.

“For many years, DCI had had the idea of establishing a body of children to serve children. The idea was brought to fruition at the right time and DCI played a major role in making this vision a reality. The Council derives its powers from the rights of the child as set out in international laws and norms, and takes part in decisions related to the rights of children guaranteed by the state and its institutions.

“DCI Junior’ holds regular meetings and trainings for the Council’s child members in particular, and also for the children who take part in the General Assembly. It also drafts future plans based on children’s interests and their needs.

The Council has been interacting with society at large, by participating in social and public activities related to children, and through the media, in a continuous effort to make the media a supporter of children in the Palestinian territories.

“Our aspiration is to work in the best interests of children through the Council’s own programs and activities or others that we can take part in.

As DCI-Palestine Section celebrates its 20th anniversary, it should be mentioned that “DCI Junior” is a follow-up to the activities of the Social Activation and Legal Accountability Unit of DCI, which seeks to benefit our children. Members of the Council also participate in various meetings of the Section to monitor the progress on Palestinian children’s aspirations.”



**Advocate Sahar Francis,
Human rights lawyer
Chairwoman of Addameer Prisoner
Support and Human Rights Association**

“Hearing that Defence for Children International-Palestine Section is celebrating its 20th anniversary brought me back some 16 years. It brought me back to that room in the Tahhan Building, to a time before the military barrier that separates Jerusalem from its suburb al-Ram Dahiyat Al-Barid was erected. In that room, I met for the first time with Khalid Quzmar and Musaika Obeid. I was just new to human rights work and defending Palestinian and Arab political prisoners, especially children. There, I learned how one could be a human rights defender. I became involved in DCI as a lawyer, then as a member of its General Assembly and later, a member of the Board. I witnessed how the organisation developed from an original idea of defending child prisoners and supporting them against the crimes of the Israeli occupation, to becoming one of the most important Palestinian organisations defending the rights of children. The Section taught me how one should take a stand in life, [and] it taught me that no matter how high the price paid, it is worth it to see the freedom of a smiling child.

“Congratulations on its 20th anniversary, I hope it will continue to raise the banners of children and childhood -- the hope of a future Palestine.”

Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs

“Ever since it was established, the Ministry of Social Affairs has been keen to promote partnerships with governmental, non-governmental and international organisations in implementing its programs and activities. This was particularly so, in the field of child protection, to provide the necessary care and rehabilitation and re-integration. We have a highly regarded partnership between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Defence for Children International-Palestine Section. Joint and complementary work is carried out by both to monitor and document Israeli violations of the rights of Palestinian children, to raise public and legal awareness on the rights of the child, supporting the rights of the child, developing children’s capacities and activating their participation, progressing Palestinian legislation on juveniles and children, preparing amendments and improvements on the Palestinian Child’s Law, preparing a modern juvenile justice system and legislation, lobbying and advocacy on the rights of the child, proposing and drafting national policies for child protection and children’s rights, representing children before the courts and providing them with legal support and follow-up. DCI also trains those working in the childcare sector, in addition to being the legal reference body for child protection networks.

“We at the Ministry are proud of our partnership and strong professional relationship with DCI. We wish this leading national organisation on its 20th anniversary continued progress and prosperity, and our hope that it will continue to serve the rights of Palestinian children.”



Mr. Issam Aruri
General Director of the
Jerusalem Legal Aid and
Human Rights Centre

“We have a range of cooperative relationships linking us with DCI. These relations have grown in recent years. DCI is clearly characterised by its specialised work. Importantly, it has filled a vacuum in the activity of human rights organisations. It is open to cooperation and coordination across sectors and with other civil society organisations and it is regarded as one of the most important organisations. It has taken several initiatives promoting confidence among Palestinian institutions, and has an enlightened strategic leadership capable of interacting within the wider environment. “We are proud of our partnership in several initiatives with DCI, and we will continue to seek to develop ways of further bilateral and sectoral cooperation. We wish DCI more success and further development of its mission, and thank it for putting smiles on the faces of deprived Palestinian children.”

Sanna Johnson,
Regional Director - Save the
Children Sweden
Regional Office for the Middle
East and North Africa

“Save the Children Sweden (SCS) would like to congratulate DCI-Palestine on the tremendous achievements they have made in creating positive changes for children during the last two decades. SCS and DCI-Palestine have worked together as partners for children’s rights through a number of projects, including providing legal support for detained Palestinian children, and also as an active member of Manara – Middle East and North Africa Child Rights Network – bringing children’s rights on top of the agenda in order to improve children’s lives in the region. On their 20th anniversary, we commend DCI-Palestine for their dedication and strong commitment to changing children’s lives for the better, to promoting and protecting the rights of Palestinian children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and to speaking out against the injustice faced by children in Palestine. We look forward to continue working together to build a better future for children in the region.”





Benoit Van Keirsbilck
President of DCI-Belgium

Fighting tirelessly against children's rights violations

Being arrested, as a child, is undoubtedly a highly traumatic experience; it's even worse when there are no objective reasons for it and when one is not allowed to contact its family and to seek support. The rate of arbitrary detention of Palestine children by the Israeli authorities is extremely and unacceptably high.

When children's rights are violated, it generates a sense of injustice and rebellion.

This is why the work of DCI Palestine, one of the strongest DCI sections in the world, if not the strongest, is so important. As long as the governments have not truly accepted to fully respect all their duties towards the children and their rights, we will need such organizations as watchdogs of democracy and human rights.

Marcos Guillén Regional Vice President of DCI-Americas

Sincere recognition goes to those at DCI-Palestine who, with their daily practice carried out during their first 20 years of existence, have taught us to understand how we may travel, together, the road of commitment to the human rights of children and adolescents. The current situation, with its regional particularities and characteristics, demands that we strengthen both the acts of condemnation of unjust situations and the formulation of proposals to overcome them, as has been the example that the Palestinian section of our global movement has given us. We who comprise DCI-Americas offer a fraternal embrace, acknowledging that we are partners in this path toward the construction of a world of greater justice and solidarity.



Birgitta Elfström and Arne Malmgren, lawyers from Sweden

We are lawyers from Sweden and have been many times trial observers in Israeli Military Courts invited by DCI when Palestinian children stand in front of a Israeli Military judge accused of throwing stones on the wall or on Israeli Military vehicles. The Palestinian children have the right to resist the occupation and they also have the right to have a fair trial. The procedure in the Military Courts does not give the Palestinian children a fair trial. Why are the European Union and UN silent about this? We are convinced that DCI:s work gives the Palestinian Children a hope that the world need to react and stand up for the Palestinian Children´s right.



Ileana Bello
Executive Director, DCI International Secretariat

I got to know DCI-Palestine for the first time in Geneva: initially through Rifat Kassis, its Director and the President of the international DCI movement, and then through the advocacy team that traveled to Geneva to lobby UN experts and human rights bodies. But it was at the time of my first visit to Palestine, for the international conference on child participation, that I realized not only how well structured, organized, and professional, but also how human, was the staff at DCI-Palestine, especially if we consider the tough living environment of the West Bank.

On this occasion of this special anniversary, I wish DCI-Palestine all the best in continuing to fight for the rights of Palestinian children as they deserve to live in a just and peaceful atmosphere.





ARCI - Gianluca Mengozzi
President of ARCI Tuscany

The relationship between ARCI and DCI started since the Palestinian section of the organization was established. Since the beginning DCI-PS became the main point of reference for our association in Palestine thanks to the human and professional skills of its members and staff.

As grassroot association, ARCI wanted to let know to its people the work of DCI and the situation children are living under occupation. Through the promotion in Italy of the Freedom Now! campaign we involved schools, people, politicians and our social clubs in supporting and sharing information about the worst forms of children rights violation. We think it's important to say that everytime we worked with DCI it reminded us how is important to struggle to build societies that fit for all children everywhere in the world.

In the name of ARCI and of the friendship that binds us to all of you, I wish you could always enjoy the fruits of your immense work.

Eyad Al Araj
Country Director
Save the Children - Sweden

For the past decade, Save the Children Sweden has been partnering closely with DCI-PS. We jointly worked on defending children's rights, we delivered immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives in the oPt, through programmes advocating and focusing on legal representation for detainee children, children in conflict with the law and promoting child participation. DCI is a strong and well-reputed organization that is of great value for children and their parents in the oPt. We both share a rights based approach and we value the input of children. DCI gives children the space to voice their concerns and always considers and respects children's opinions.





Mieke Zagt
Program Officer Middle East - ICCO

Thousands and thousands of Palestinians have been detained over the last decades. I haven't seen one family which has not been affected. The impact on children is huge, and the effect on the future cannot be underestimated.

That's why we speak out on the fact that up till today even Palestinian children are put behind bars, sometimes without a fair trial, or facing torture in Israeli prisons behind the Wall, on the other side of the checkpoint, where their parents are not allowed to enter.

That's why I regard the defence for children of crucial importance, in order to safeguard our future.



Norberto Liwski
President of DCI-Argentina

The children and adolescents of Palestine have been able to recognise, during the last 20 years, that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has acquired a concrete and effective representation by means of the diverse initiatives of DCI-Palestine.

In this context, I have been able to affirm in my character as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child the valuable efforts to sustain, even given the adversity and the affronts to which thousands of children in the region have been exposed, the unwavering defence of their rights, including in circumstances of deprivation of liberty behind the walls. I am certain that the strengthening of DCI-Palestine is an effective contribution to peace and to coexistence among peoples whose dignity is cemented in the human rights of their children and adolescents.





Dr. Elias Rashmawi

To be a Palestinian child

To be a Palestinian child is in itself an issue...to be a Palestinian child means that you have to go beyond the borders of your childhood and your years to confront conflict at an early age, to be martyred before you have barely started out, to be arrested before you have lived, to attempt the impossible to imagine the faces of your father, mother, brother and sister. To be a Palestinian child means that the chair of your classmate at school suddenly becomes vacant, his familiar face disappears, and the echo of his bright laughter is no more due to a treacherous bullet that kidnapped him from his milieu as simply as that.

Being a Palestinian child.. means opening your eyes with the cry of the newborn to stories of the homeland ...a homeland of mere legend and a remote dream...as our notable poet Mahmoud Darwish once said:

“ There ...in South Lebanon, fragile tents were erected for us, and from now on, our names will change, from now on we become one thing with no differences, from now on we will be stamped only as ‘REFUGEES’.

-What is a refugee dad?

-Nothing ...nothing ...you will not understand

- What is a refugee grandfather? I want to understand.

-It is not to be a child any more from now on.”



The concept was born within this context, in a time of bitter conflict and brave resistance, the time of Palestinian collective creativity, of glory and dignity: it was at that very time that the idea of Defense for Children International – Palestine section was born. It started just like any idea, simple and spontaneous, but with profound repercussions when Rifat Kassis took the initiative in 1991 to gather a group of friends together : that interaction resulted in the launching of the organization. The initiative was a qualitative response to deal with the diverse and unique issues that affect Palestinian children. These issues included the detention of children by the Israeli occupation authorities, a practice that became rampant during the intifada (uprising), and trying these children before Israeli military courts in flagrant violation of international law.

The interaction between DCI –Palestine and the Palestinian situation on the ground, with all its diversity and complexities, developed the experience further and accumulated knowledge and expertise. The work of the Palestine section expanded, attracting a group of dedicated and proactive young Palestinians who made it into one of the leading sections internationally. This culminated in the election of the current director of the Palestine section as the President of DCI movement worldwide,

while the ex-director of the Palestine section, Mr. George Abul Zuluf, joined the UNICEF office in Yemen.

Over time, the organization has developed its structure and programs. It has become a reliable source both nationally and internationally for all issues related to Palestinian children, including the documentation of violations perpetrated by the occupation against the rights of the Palestinian child, as defined in the International Bill of Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The organization has also contributed to raising social awareness of the rights of children through centers established in several Palestinian cities, and through programs conducted with schools and civil society organizations.

After twenty years of sustained efforts, it can be said with full confidence that the Palestine section of DCI occupies a distinguished and leading place in both Palestine and the international arena. In this sense, the Palestine section has become a model for the resilience of the Palestinian people to counter efforts aimed at their downfall and suppression. It is a fact that in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, the Palestinian people have been able to overcome obstacles and launch initiatives and foundations for worthy social structures.

This would not have been possible without the awareness, determination, and resilience of the Palestinian people and their readiness to face the harsh conditions with unlimited sacrifice.

Blessed be our people and children...blessed be those who still believe that there is something worthy of life in this land.

